

fit bits

Air For Sale

Move over juice bars, here comes oxygen. Oxygen bars are breaking ground in high-altitude ski areas, such as Telluride, Colo., and Mammoth Mountain, Calif.

For about \$1 per minute, oxygen bars claim to provide relief from lactic-acid-filled muscles, as well as altitude-induced headaches and nausea—and to boost the stamina of customers who hit the O₂ bar before they ski.

The bars combine oxygen with aromatherapy to create blends such as Nirvana—with lavender, balsam and fir needle—or Tangerine Twist. Patrons breathe through a nose hose, which tickles slightly until you get used to it. The hose allows you to breathe regular air as well, boosting your

level of oxygen intake from about 20 percent to roughly 40 percent—about the level scientists think was in the air before the advent of pollution.

While O₂ bars don't claim to be substitutes for medical attention, some doctors are skeptical. Dr. Marty Rosenthal of Telluride Medical Center says that getting oxygen without a prescription could just cover symptoms of a more severe problem. He especially

warns that it could be harmful for people with conditions such as lung disease. But others have jumped on the O₂ bandwagon.

"People who suffer from altitude sickness come here," says Megan Klammer of Octopus's Garden in Mammoth Lakes. "The hospital sends them." The U.S. Food and Drug Adminis-

tration has yet to weigh in on the topic. In the meantime, oxygen bars are bringing a whole new meaning to "taking a breather" after a hard day of skiing. —CASSI CLARK

Sore Spot

When it comes to ski-induced muscle soreness, preventive medicine is often the best medicine. Certified nutritional consultant Donna Pessin of Boulder, Colo., suggests taking antioxidants such as vitamins A, C, E and bioflavonoids, which help rid the body of soreness-inducing free radicals. They're available in supplement form at most health food stores, but many nutritionists recommend getting them the old-fashioned way: from fresh fruits and vegetables. Oranges, strawberries and dark green leafy veggies, for example, are all loaded with antioxidants. —C.C.

